

# **DPH Announces First Flu Deaths of the 2018-2019 Season; Officials Remind Delawareans to Get Vaccinated**

**DOVER** – The Division of Public Health (DPH) is reporting the first flu-related deaths of the 2018-2019 flu season. A 65-year-old man who was infected with Influenza A passed away last week, making him the first person to die due to flu complications this season. In addition, a 73-year-old man and a 77-year-old woman, both also infected with Influenza A, passed away within the last week. All three individuals were Sussex County residents and all had underlying health conditions.

As of Dec. 22, 2018, the most recent date for which statistics are available, there have been 461 laboratory-confirmed cases of influenza in Delaware. This number only reflects the number of lab-confirmed cases; the actual number of cases circulating statewide is likely much higher. Additionally, 80 people have been hospitalized with flu-like symptoms since the start of the flu season. These numbers are an increase from the 2017-2018 season when at the same time, there were 225 laboratory-confirmed cases of influenza and 63 hospitalizations.

“Our hearts go out to the families and friends of those who have died from flu-related complications,” said DPH Director Dr. Karyl Rattay. “This is an unfortunate and solemn reminder that the flu can be deadly. If you haven’t already, please take the time to get a flu vaccine and make sure everyone in your family has received theirs, as well. The flu vaccine lowers your chances of getting the flu and can lessen the severity of symptoms if you do fall ill. Also be sure to take

any antiviral medication as your doctor prescribes.”

Single-week numbers of laboratory-confirmed flu cases have started to increase in Delaware. A total of 179 lab-confirmed flu cases were recorded between Dec. 16 and Dec. 22, 2018, compared to 95 laboratory-confirmed cases reported between Dec. 9 and Dec. 15, 2018.

In addition to getting a flu vaccine and taking antiviral medication, DPH recommends the following:

- Practice social distancing if you have cold or flu-like symptoms.
- Wash hands frequently with soap and water or use alcohol-based hand sanitizers.
- Cover sneezes and coughs with a tissue, and dispose of tissues immediately; if no tissue is available, sneeze or cough into your inner elbow.
- Stay home if you are sick until you are free of fever for 24 hours – with a temperature of less than 100 degrees F (37.8 degrees C), without the use of fever-reducing medications for at least 24 hours.

Social distancing means that those sick with the flu should stay home from work, school, and other gatherings and not return until they have been free of fever – with a temperature less than 100 degrees F (37.8 degrees C) without the use of fever-reducing medications for at least 24 hours. They should avoid close contact with well people in the household, and stay well-hydrated by drinking plenty of water and other clear liquids. Over-the-counter medicines can provide symptom relief, but if you suspect you have influenza, call your doctor as he or she may decide to provide antiviral medications to help hasten recovery and prevent serious complications. This is particularly important for those who feel very sick, are pregnant or have chronic medical conditions.

Flu symptoms come on suddenly, and include fever, cough, sore

throat, runny or stuffy nose, headaches and body aches, chills and fatigue. Some people get complications including pneumonia, bronchitis and sinus and ear infections. People with pre-existing health conditions such as diabetes and asthma are more susceptible to catching the flu.

DPH will be administering free flu vaccines in the basement floor Library in Legislative Hall at 410 Legislative Ave., Dover, on Wednesday, Jan. 16, from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Members of the public who wish to attend this flu clinic must go through security. Additionally, flu vaccines continue to be available at many pharmacies and grocery stores, and through primary care physicians and some specialists. To find participating stores, enter your zip code in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) flu vaccine finder at [www.cdc.gov/flu/](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/). For more information about the flu, visit [flu.delaware.gov/](http://flu.delaware.gov/) or call DPH at 1-800-282-8672.

Flu shots are still available at DPH clinics located within the State Service Centers:

- Porter State Service Center, 509 W. 8th St., Wilmington. For all ages 9 and up. Walk-ins are welcome Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to noon and from 1:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.
- Hudson State Service Center, 501 Ogletown Road, Newark. For all ages, including children age 6 months and older. Call 302-283-7587 (choose Option 2) to make an appointment Monday through Friday.
- Williams State Service Center, 805 River Road, Dover. For all ages, including children age 6 months and older. Call 302-857-5140 to make an appointment Monday through Thursday, 8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
- Milford State Service Center – Riverwalk, 253 N.E. Front St., Milford. For ages 9 years and older. Call 302-424-7130 to make an appointment on Mondays from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. and Wednesdays from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

- Anna C. Shipley State Service Center, 350 Virginia Ave., Seaford. For all ages, including children age 6 months and older. Walk-ins welcome Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. For information, call 302-628-6772.

- Adams State Service Center, 544 S. Bedford St., Georgetown. For all ages, including children age 6 months and older. Walk-ins welcome on Thursdays only from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

For more information about flu surveillance in Delaware, read the weekly flu report at [dhss.delaware.gov/dph/epi/influenzawkly.html](http://dhss.delaware.gov/dph/epi/influenzawkly.html).

*A person who is deaf, hard-of-hearing, deaf-blind or speech-disabled can call the DPH phone number above by using TTY services. Dial 7-1-1 or 800-232-5460 to type your conversation to a relay operator, who reads your conversation to a hearing person at DPH. The relay operator types the hearing person's spoken words back to the TTY user. To learn more about TTY availability in Delaware, visit <http://delawarerelay.com>.*

*Delaware Health and Social Services is committed to improving the quality of the lives of Delaware's citizens by promoting health and well-being, fostering self-sufficiency, and protecting vulnerable populations. DPH, a division of DHSS, urges Delawareans to make healthier choices with the 5-2-1 Almost None campaign: eat 5 or more fruits and vegetables each day, have no more than 2 hours of recreational screen time each day (includes TV, computer, gaming), get 1 or more hours of physical activity each day, and drink almost no sugary beverages.*